

(Washington, DC) This morning, Congressman Charles Gonzalez, Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) Task Force on Civil Rights, and Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez, the CHC's leading member on the Voting Rights Act, issued the following statements as the House Judiciary Committee began its mark-up of the "Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006."

"I appreciate the careful consideration of the House Judiciary Committee, and in particular the work done by both the Committee's Republican and Democratic leadership, as we begin the mark-up of this critical piece of legislation," said Congressman Gonzalez. "The protections granted by the VRA have been recognized, valued and renewed by leaders from both parties for decades. I look forward to continuing the bi-partisan commitment to civil rights that has driven the renewal of the VRA over the last four decades."

"The Voting Rights Act has been one of the most important and effective civil rights laws in our country's history," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "The Act's temporary provisions, including the language assistance provisions in Section 203 and pre-clearing requirements in Section 5, protect the rights of tax-paying citizens to participate in the electoral process. It is important that we pass a clean version of this bill that renews the meaning, protections, and legacy of this landmark civil rights law."

The Voting Rights Act was first passed in 1965 and last renewed in 1982. Key provisions are set to expire in 2007, including Justice Department pre-approval of changes to voting procedures and language assistance to voters in certain jurisdictions. The bipartisan reauthorization will renew these provisions for 25 years.